

## CLAIMS

1. An image coder for performing compression coding on an image signal, comprising:

5 a judging means for judging the degree of difficulty of coding an input image signal; and

a changing means for changing a frame rate in accordance with a result of judgment by said judging means.

10 2. An image coder as set forth in claim 1, wherein said judging means judges the degree of difficulty of coding said input image by using a quantizer scale of when a bit rate is controlled to be a predetermined value.

15 3. An image coder as set forth in claim 1, wherein said changing means changes the frame rate by generating a code so that a frame of said input image signal and a frame of a reference image become identical.

4. An image coder for performing compression coding on an image signal, comprising:

20 a judging means for judging a degree of difficulty of coding an input image signal by using a quantizer scale; and

25 a changing means for changing a frame rate by forcibly generating a code so that a frame of said input image signal and a frame of a reference image become

identical in accordance with a result of judgment by said judging means.

5. An image coder using inter-frame compression of forward prediction and bidirectional prediction, including:

an operating state for normal coding; and  
at least one operating state of a frequency and a frame rate of use of bidirectional prediction and frame rate changed in accordance with the degree of difficulty of coding an image.

6. A method of image coding for performing compression coding on an image signal, including the steps of:

judging a degree of difficulty of coding an input image signal; and

changing a frame rate in accordance with a result of said judgement of a degree of difficulty of coding.

7. A method of image coder as set forth in claim 6 for judging a degree of difficulty of coding said input image by using a quantizer scale of when a bit rate is controlled to be a predetermined value.

8. A method of image coder as set forth in claim 6 for changing a frame rate by generating a code so that a frame of said input image signal and a frame of a

9. A method of image coding for performing compression coding on an image signal including the steps of:

10. A method of image coding using inter-frame compression of forward prediction and bidirectional prediction, including the step of:

11. A method of image coding as set forth in claim 10 for judging the image quality of said reference image by using a quantizer scale.

changing a frame rate by generating a code so

that a frame of said input image signal and a frame of a reference image are identical in accordance with a degree of difficulty of coding an image; and

switching whether or not to use bidirectional prediction in accordance with an image quality of a reference image when the image quality of the reference image cannot be maintained.

13. A method of image coding as set forth in claim 12, for judging the degree of difficulty of coding an image and image quality of the reference image by using a quantizer scale.

14. A method of image coding as set forth in claim 12, for changing a period M for performing forward prediction and a frame rate in accordance with the degree of difficulty of coding an image and the designated bit rate when performing image coding at a designated bit rate.

15. A method of image coding as set forth in claim 12, wherein decisions to raise the frame rate at a period are made longer than decisions to reduce the frame rate.

16. A method of image coding as set forth in claim 12, wherein a threshold of the degree of difficulty of coding is set to be different when raising the frame rate and when reducing the rate.